

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested.

Claims 1-10 remain in the application. All of the claims have been amended to eliminate the reference numerals. Reference numerals are not required under U.S. patent law and are given no patentable weight. Accordingly, amendments to eliminate reference numerals are not narrowing amendments and are not amendments entered for purposes of patentability. Claim 1 also has been amended to define the invention more clearly in terms of structure and less in terms of the molding process steps.

The claims were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Ishikawa et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,244,900. The Examiner identified elements of the Ishikawa et al. reference that were considered by the Examiner to correspond to the original claims. In this regard, the Examiner stated that the Ishikawa et al. reference shows a resiliently deformable lock 18 with base 19b that has a larger width than a projection 21. The Examiner then stated that the subject matter of method claims 5-8 was considered to be inherent.

The Examiner will note that the Ishikawa et al. reference is assigned to the assignee of the subject invention, and hence the assignee is very familiar with the subject matter of Ishikawa et al. The Ishikawa et al. reference is very different from the subject matter defined by the amended claims. In particular, amended claim 1 defines the connector housing as having opposite front and rear ends. The housing is defined further as having "at least one cavity extending between the ends for receiving a terminal fitting along an inserting direction." Additional, the housing is defined as having "a notch extending into the front end of the housing and partway towards the rear end" so that the

notch communicates with the cavity. A resiliently deformable lock is defined in amended claim 1 as being “cantilevered forwardly from a wall of the housing for engaging the terminal fitting.” The lock is defined as comprising “a base disposed in the notch and a projection projecting from the base into the cavity.” The projection is defined as having “a width narrower than the width of the base.”

The additional clarity provided by amended claim 1 clearly distinguishes amended claim 1 from Ishikawa et al. The element 21 of Ishikawa et al. clearly is narrower than the areas identified by the numerals 18 and 19b. However, the area 21 is disposed entirely in the region of the Ishikawa et al. connector that would be comparable to the claimed notch. The front portion 21 of Ishikawa et al. is narrow so that a contact portion 23 can be molded into a wall of the housing spaced from the lock. The contact portion 23 is disposed to engage the stabilizer 8 of the terminal fitting to positively stop the forward insertion of a terminal fitting into the cavity. The equivalent of the claimed projection is the element 19b of Ishikawa et al. and the equivalent of the claimed base is the area of the Ishikawa et al. lock identified by the numeral 18. These two areas have exactly the same widths. There is no suggestion in Ishikawa et al. of widening the area 18 relative to the area 19b. In fact, such a widening presumably would impede the ability of the stabilizer 8 to slide along the side of the lock and into engagement with the contact portion 23.

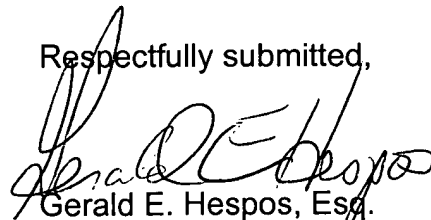
It is submitted that the invention defined by amended claim 1 distinguishes very clearly over Ishikawa et al. and nothing in Ishikawa et al. would motivate the skilled artisan to make the significant redesign that would be required to bring Ishikawa et al. closer to the claimed invention. In fact, any such redesign of Ishikawa et al. would adversely affect the primary function of Ishikawa et al. pertaining to the engagement of the

stabilizer 8 with the contact portion 23. New claims 9 and 10 are patentable over Ishikawa et al. for the same reasons.

Counsel often concurs with Examiner's who conclude that method claims are inherent. In this instance, however, method claim 5 and its dependent claims are not at all inherent in Ishikawa et al. In particular, amended claim 5 includes molding the cavity and the projection with a rearwardly removed mold and molding the notch and the base with forwardly removed mold. These molding steps are carried out so that the notch is wider than the cavity. In contrast, the Ishikawa et al. reference clearly teaches and requires a notch that is narrower than the cavity. The claimed molding steps could not produce the Ishikawa et al. connector. Once again, the redesign that would be required to bring Ishikawa et al. closer to the claimed method would adversely affect the ability of Ishikawa et al. to perform its intended functions. No such redesign is suggested.

In view of the preceding amendment and remarks, it is submitted that the claims define patentable subject matter and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicant's attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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